

# ISLAM:

A LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE FRAMJI COWASJI INSTITUTE,  
BOMBAY, INDIA,

THURSDAY EVENING 10th NOVEMBER 1892.

BY

MUHAMMAD ALEXANDER RUSSEL WEBB, Esq.,  
LATE OF THE AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE.

PUBLISHED BY

BADRUDIN ABDULLA KUR, Esq.,

SECRETARY TO THE RECEPTION COMMITTEE,

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# A NOTABLE MAHOMEDAN CONVERT ON ISLAM.

"A very large and influential number of persons of all communities was present to hear the lecture of Mr. Muhammad Alexander Russel Webb on Islam, delivered at the Framji Cawasji Institute, on Thursday the 10th November 1892. Among those present were Kazi Mahomed Saleh Abdul Latif Londay, His Excellency Kadri Beg, Messrs. Henry Ballantine, Ilusnoy Beg, Ahmedbhaji Habibbhaji, Musabhai Tharia Topan, Haji Suleman Abdul Wahid Ibrahim Rahimtula, Abdallabhai Lalji, Badrudin Abdulla Kur, Husen Meyan Chorgay, Karsondas Chhabildas, Barrister-at-Law, Sundernath Dinanath Khotay, Purshotmadas Vandrawandas. Ardesir Framji Moos, Ranina, Moulvi Abdul Razzak, Sayyad Fakhrudin Edroos, Munshi Shaik Ahmed, Mahmud Meyan Sharifuddin Khan, Hasan Meyan Sharifuddin, Amiruddin Tyabji, Najinuddin Tyabji, Fateh Ali Shaik Ahmed, Ibrahim Ahmed, Mabomed Usoof Khat Khatay, Moulvi Farahtulla, Munshi Baukor, Abdul Gani Muhimtulay, Haji Abdulla Arab, and about 500 others.

On the motion of Mr. Budrudin Abdulla Kur, Kazi Muhammad Saleh Londay was voted to the Chair."

Mr. Webb addressed as follows :—

"I have been requested to tell you why I—an American born in a country which is nominally Christian, and reared under the drippings, or more properly perhaps the drivellings, of an orthodox Presbyterian pulpit—came to adopt the faith of Islam as my guide in life. I might reply promptly and truthfully that I adopted this religion because I found, after protracted study, that it was the best and only system adapted to the spiritual needs of humanity; but this reply would be altogether too general to be satisfactory. Now instead of telling you in detail how and why I became a Mussulman, I will try to tell you what Mahomed really taught, and endeavour to show that his religious system has a much more valid claim to the careful, unprejudiced attention of the Western world than the average Christian is willing to concede. It is manifestly impossible in a single lecture to present a full and complete exposition of the Islamic system, one that will satisfy the enquiring mind. I will, therefore, be compelled to generalize to some extent. And here let me say that I was not born, as some bays seem to be, with a fervently religious strain in my character. I will not even assert that I was a *good* boy, such as mothers sometimes point out as shining examples for their own sons. I attended the Presbyterian Sunday School of my native town, when I couldn't avoid it, and listened with weariness and impatience to the long, abstract discourses of the minister while I longed to get out into the glad sunshine and hear the more satisfying sermons preached by God himself through the murmuring brooks, the gorgeous flowers, and the joyous birds. When I reached the age of 20, and became practically my own master, I was so tired of the restraint and dullness of the Church, that I wandered away from it and never returned to it. As a boy

I found nothing in orthodox Christianity calculated to win me to it, and in later years I encountered convincing evidences of its grave errors and insufficiency as a means of securing salvation, or of elevating and purifying the human character. Fortunately I was of an enquiring turn of mind—I wanted a reason for everything, and I found that neither laymen nor clergy could give me any rational explanation of this faith, but either told me that such things were mysteries or that they were beyond my comprehension. After trying in vain to find something in the Christian system to satisfy the longings of my soul and meet the demands of reason, I drifted into materialism, and for several years had no religion at all. About eleven years ago I became interested in the study of the Oriental religions, beginning with Buddhism as students of the Eastern systems usually do. I will not weary you with details further than to say that at that time I had access to a most excellent library of about 13,000 volumes, from four to seven hours a day at my disposal, and that I was intensely in earnest in my efforts to solve the mysteries of life and death, and to know what relations the religious systems of the world bore to these mysteries. My mind was in a peculiarly receptive yet exacting and analytical condition, absolutely free from the prejudices of all creeds, and ready to absorb the truth, no matter where it might be found. Firmly materialistic, I looked at first to the advanced school of materialistic science and found that it was just as completely immersed in the darkness of ignorance as I was. It could tell me the name of every bone, muscle, nerve and organ of the human body, as well as its position and purpose or function. But it could not tell me the real difference between a live man and a dead one. It could tell me the name of every tree, plant, and flower, and designate the species to which each belonged, and what were its apparent properties and attributes, but it could not tell me how and why the tree grew and the flower bloomed. It was absolutely certain that man was born, lived a brief space, and died, but whence he came and whether he went were riddles which they confessed themselves utterly unable to solve. "Those matters belong to the Church," said a scientist to me. "But the church knows absolutely nothing of them," I replied. "Nor do I, nor does science," was the helpless, hopeless way in which he dismissed the question from the conversation.

I saw Mill and Locke, Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Huxley, and many other more or less learned writers discussing with a great show of wisdom concerning protoplasm and protogen and monads, and yet not one of them could tell me what the soul was or what became of it after death. "But no one can tell you that," I fancy I hear some one say. That is one of the greatest errors that poor blind humanity ever made; there are many people who have solved this mystery, but they

are not the materialistic followers of any creed. I have spoken so much of myself in order to show you that my adoption of Islam was not the result of misguided sentiment, blind credulity, or sudden emotional impulse, but that it was born of earnest, honest, persistent, unprejudiced study and investigation, and an intense desire to know the truth. And now let us see what Islam really is, and you will readily understand, I think, why I have accepted it. If anyone should ask me to reply at once to the question, "What do the Mahomedans believe?" I would be as completely unable to reply, without hesitation, as I would be if asked, "What do the Christians believe?" The disposition of the Christians of all ages, from the days of Constantine to the present, to amplify and adorn their religion with ideas of their own has been shared by many of the professed followers of the Arabian Prophet, and there are prevalent among the Moslems of our time many points of belief which were never taught by Mahomed and which are not entitled to a place in the true faith of Islam. The wonderful fecundity of the human mind is amply shown by the vast variety of conceptions or misconceptions which may be found among the religious doctrines of mankind, and which were never a part of the original fundamental principles, but are the results of the biased speculations and misconceptions of those who have assumed to be religious authorities. It is a well-known fact that every one of the fifty odd different Christian sects bases its system of doctrines upon the Bible, and that the followers of each sect appeals to that much-abused book for proof that their belief is right and reasonable and logical and that all the others are more or less erroneous. Wade through the tons of Mahomedan and Christian literature extant if you have the patience, and go among the followers of the various sects and listen to their arguments, if you desire to acquire a perfect realization of the fertility of the human intellect and the elastic possibilities of religious literature. If you do not speedily find yourselves in a condition of doubt and perplexity closely bordering upon despair, you will have failed to follow the intricacies of the arguments put before you. If, from the multitudinous and multifarious conceptions you will encounter you can form a positive and satisfying opinion as to what Mahomed and Jesus really did or did not teach, you will do much better than anyone who has ever tried the experiment before you. There are certain clearly defined dogmas which nearly, if not quite, all Moslems believe in the abstract, but, with the possible exception of the Sufis or esoteric Mahomedans, they are greatly divided in their conceptions of the Prophet's teachings.

Orthodox Mahomedanism may be divided into six heads. 1st—Faith in God, the one God, the Creator of all things, who always was and ever will be; the single, immutable, omniscient, omnipotent, all merciful, eternal God. 2nd—Faith in angels, otherreal beings perfect in form and radiant in beauty; without sex, free from all gross or sensual passion and the appetites and infirmities of frail humanity. 3rd—Belief in the Koran as a book of divine revelation given at various times to Mahomed

by God or through the Angel Gabriel. 4th—Belief in God's prophets, the most pro-eminent of whom were Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mahomed. 5th—Belief in the resurrection and final judgment when all mankind shall appear before God, who will reward or punish them according to the deeds they have done on earth. Opinions differ, of course, as to the nature of these rewards and punishments. 6th—Belief in Predestination, or the inability of man to avoid, by any act of his own, the destiny irrevocably predetermined by God and written down in the eternal book previous to the creation of the world. At the first glance this seems to deprive man of his character as a free agent, but a closer examination shows that it does not do so. It will be seen, therefore, that in its fundamentals, it closely resembles esoteric or so called Christianity when the latter is stripped of its objectionable dogmas. From these central points diverge numerous lines which form in the aggregate an elaborate system of faith and worship the effects of which vary greatly according to the character of its followers. The articles of religious practice are five in number, namely, Prayer, Ablution, Alms, Fasting and Pilgrimage. And now let us endeavour to ascertain from whence this system sprang, by considering who and what our Prophet was. And let me assure you that in seeking for the truths I have found I have had to overturn a vast deal of rubbish in the shape of false history, false opinions, and false reasoning, before I caught the faint gleam of that priceless jewel which has been preserved to man through all the ages, although the bigots and pharisees of orthodoxy have striven most earnestly to destroy it. In the light of reason and human testimony it has been quite conclusively shown that he was a pure and holy man who voluntarily gave up all that the world holds dear, in order to obtain a knowledge of the one great spiritual truth; that he suffered ridicule, obloquy, and persecution of the cruellest, most vindictive character in trying to teach this truth to the Arabs, and that he died in extreme squalor and poverty after having fully accomplished his mission. These are facts which are generally admitted even by Christian writers, and it is, therefore, unnecessary to call Mahomedan witnesses. It is said that a young man once asked Jesus what he should do in order to inherit everlasting life. The reply was, "Sell all that thou hast, give to the poor, take up the cross and follow me." Now that is exactly what Mahomed did, except that he did not follow Jesus in the sense understood by the orthodox Christian. He sacrificed all he had in the world and bore the cross of trials and suffering faithfully and patiently until he had securely planted the true faith in the East. It has been plainly shown by every writer who has given us anything purporting to be a record of the life of our Prophet, that during his childhood he was remarkable for his quiet, gentle demeanour, his quick intelligence, and his modest retiring, thoughtful disposition. While he mingled freely with the boys of Mecca he did not acquire any of their coarse and vicious habits. As a youth he was distinguished by his affectionate ways, his frankness and

truthfulness under all circumstances, and as a man who was upright, just and generous in his dealings, and was a merchant whose honesty and reliability were unimpeached. So generally was his character recognized that he was called by the people of Mecca "Al Amin, the Trusty." Does it seem possible that a man with such pronounced and well-grounded principles of morality and integrity followed until the age of 50 could suddenly change and become what many of the Christian writers have wickedly declared him to be? I don't believe it. All the prominent Christian authors have been forced to the confession, more or less plainly made, that after protracted study and research, they were utterly unable to form an adequate and satisfying conception of his character. The explanation of their failure is plain—they reasoned from the standpoints of their own materialistic creeds, and facts which would have solved the riddle for them, had they been able to break away from their false opinions and beliefs, were cast aside as valueless. Several of these sapient writers have said in substance: "Mahomed was not our kind of a Christian, and, therefore, he *must* have been an impostor. But it troubles us to find that such a truly pure and holy man was not a Christian." Had they understood the teachings of their own Prophet they would not have wondered at this seeming phenomenon. It has been admitted that Mahomed's material prospects were all that the most ambitious young man of his time could have desired, until he began to teach spiritual truth. His relatives were wealthy, and his uncle, Abu Taleb, who took him into his family and became a kind, affectionate and indulgent father to him after the death of his own parents, was one of the wealthiest and most prosperous merchants in Araria. The guardianship of the Kaaba at Mecca, the incumbent of which office was also Governor of the city, was hereditarily fixed in his family line, and, had he been content to drift with the tide of life as he found it, it would certainly have fallen to him together with his uncle's great wealth. Had he been the crafty, ambitious, unprincipled man he is popularly believed by the Christians to have been, he would undoubtedly have waited patiently and kept in favour with his relatives until, in the natural course of events, he must have become one of the foremost men in Arabia, crowned with wealth and high honours, and surrounded by all the comforts, luxuries, and grandeur of a worldly life. But he chose the better way, although it led him through a path thickly strewn with sharp stones and cruel thorns, and, from a worldly point of view, filled his life with bitter disappointments, privations, sorrows, and sufferings of the most harrowing description. And herein is a lesson which should sink deeply into the hearts of those who have turned their backs upon the higher way, and are engaged in that mad chase after rupees and comfort which is so deeply engrossing the attention of the greater part of the world. You are probably all familiar with the history of our Prophet's separation from the affairs of the world. He passed long periods in prayer, fasting, and meditation and reduced his diet to dates and barley, his only

drink being water. This abstemiousness was continued to the close of his life, and it is said that sometimes for a whole month he would eat nothing but dates, and those in very small quantities. His favourite place of retirement was a cave on Mount Hara, where he would spend several days at a time in meditation, and where he received his mission to shed the light of truth upon the world—to kindle that fire which in after years burned so brilliantly and filled the entire East with its glorious effulgence. He was often accompanied by his faithful wife, who was the first convert to his doctrines, and who seemed to share with her whole soul his zeal and devotion to his purpose. Whenever he emerged from his retirement and returned to his home in Mecca, he went about doing the good that came to his hands and assisting those who, through sickness or misfortune, were unable to provide for themselves. In this way the greater portion of his own wealth, and that which he had acquired through his marriage with Khadijah melted away.

Now it is necessary to weigh carefully all these well known and universally admitted facts concerning our Prophet's life prior, and immediately subsequent to, his inspiration in order to arrive at a rational conclusion regarding his character, and to make those comparisons between him and the other holy prophets which are inevitable. During the period we have now reached, he made no effort to teach publicly any of the truths which had been revealed to him, and his manner of life seems to have attracted very little attention beyond the circle of his immediate relatives. At this time he was looked upon as a harmless fanatic, who had foolishly sacrificed his brilliant worldly prospects for some reason which was not quite clear to his friends, and in which they took no very great interest. Subsequently he publicly announced his mission, and called down upon himself that bitter, relentless, cruel persecution and storm of ridicule which has been more or less graphically described by the historians. Has there ever been a prophet who attempted to teach the world the one true way to eternal life whose path has been strewn with roses? Not one. The world hates the truth with fiendish malignancy, and calls madly for the blood of him who attempts to teach it. The claim made by Mahomed that he accused the fury and contempt of the Meccans was substantially the same as that made by Jesus of Nazareth, who received similar treatment at the hands of the enraged Jews. He said that he was a Prophet and Apostle of God, inspired by the Supreme Being to point out to the Arabs the true way to salvation and to redeem them from idolatry and the vices which they had acquired indirectly from following a thoroughly materialistic religion. He repeatedly told his hearers that he was not a supernatural being but a man, like unto them, with the same physical structure, the same mental endowments, and the same natural inclinations and propensities; that from the Supreme spirit he had learned the solution of the mystery of life and death and the true way to eternal life; that he had given up the world that he might teach them this way—had crucified himself that they might live—and

this is the only way in which Jesus was ever crucified, all the sophistical arguments and quotations from false history to the contrary notwithstanding. Mahomed claimed to be a Prophet sent from God in the same sense that Moses, Abraham, Elias, Jesus, and every other truly inspired prophet claimed to have been sent. He taught no new religious system, but sought to revive that one eternal truth which has been preserved to man from the beginning of the world, and will continue to be preserved as long as the world shall stand. His claim was no more nor less than that made by Jesus, who never claimed to be God nor the son of God in the sense in which some misguided people believe he did. In the 58th verse of the 8th chapter of the Gospel of St. John is a statement attributed to Jesus which has sorely puzzled Bible readers and commentators, but which is a plain unequivocal statement of all that Jesus claimed to be, when it is properly translated from the original Greek. It reads thus : "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, before Abraham was I am." As the verse stands, it is an ungrammatical absurdity and means nothing. The correct translation into English would make it read thus : "Verily, verily I say unto you, I am what Abraham was before me." That is to say, an inspired Prophet like Abraham. Jesus admitted that there were other true prophets before him, and some of the Mahomedan doctors insist, and their arguments and evidence are by no means unworthy of consideration, that he plainly prophesied the coming of Mahomed, declaring that the latter would lead his followers into the truth. And I assure you that our Prophet never taught anything that was at all at variance with the true teachings of Jesus; on the contrary, a careful comparison of the true tenets of the faith of Islam with those taught to his disciples by the Prophet of Nazareth cannot fail to show that in their tone and tendency they are identical. Mahomed frequently referred to the Nazarene as "Jesus, the inspired son of Mary," the Holy Prophet sent by God to the Jews, and paid to him the loftiest tributes of love, reverence, and esteem; but for the absurd dogmas, misconceptions, and superstitions of the system erroneously called Christianity he had nothing but the strongest condemnation. He taught that at certain periods in the development of humanity a prophet arose from among the people to raise them from the degrading materialism of dogmatic creeds, the unhealthy growths of ambition, selfishness and worldliness, and to guide them into the true path from which the desires of the flesh had led them to stray; that this was God's method of holding humanity in its onward course toward spiritual perfection. He declared that he was the last of a long line of prophets, and that he taught nothing different from the teachings of his predecessors, that his purpose was to renew the one unproven truth in the hearts of his fellow Arabs. The validity of this declaration is apparent when one has some knowledge of the philosophy of Islam. "What!" exclaims the Christian, "And does Islam really contain a philosophy?" Yes, my misguided brother, it is a philosophy as well as a religion, and a pure, perfect

holy philosophy too. Look about you and see the beauties and wonders of nature, the growth and decay of the trees and flowers, the movements of the planets, the changes of the tides and seasons—all the grand manifestations of nature moving on with steady, majestic regularity under the guidance of an unseen power, which is a dense mystery to materialistic science. The unvarying order which pervades the whole system indicates the power of a masterhand. We do not find grapes growing upon cocoanut trees nor figs upon thistles, but each fruit appears and matures upon its own tree; and decays and passes into nothing, if not used for human food. We see the flash of the lightning and hear the roll of the thunder and the shrill shriek of the cyclone, but the average man knows nothing of the irresistible force behind all these manifestations. Science has tried to explain the phenomena, and has failed utterly, although it has discovered that there are certain fixed laws and conditions which govern them and make it possible to foretell their coming. Like Jesus and every other prophet who has taught the true doctrine of salvation, Mahomed found it necessary to present his teachings in two aspects, or rather to divide them into two parts—one for the very few who could comprehend or assimilate the higher truths, and the other for the masses who were so blinded by worldliness and the bonds of the flesh that they could grasp only the materialistic ideas of forms and ceremonies. The Koran and the traditions are full of suggestions of this idea. Jesus said to his disciples : "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but unto those who are without, all things are done in parables." If Jesus and Mahomed were inspired by God, it is only reasonable to conclude that the mysteries of what we call "Nature" were unfolded to them, and they were able to teach a higher philosophy than that known to the materialist of to-day. And I tell you frankly, that it was through this exalted philosophy that I was brought to Islam. Every Mussulman who reads his Koran and has any conception whatever of the doctrines of his religion freely concedes that Jesus was an inspired prophet; but he also knows that the system known to-day as Christianity and taught from the pulpits of the so-called Christian churches is no more like the system taught by the Nazarene than is the African Vaudoo system or the absurd antics and notions of the Salvation Army. When I talk to a Christian about Islam he promptly declares that it is opposed to civilization, endorses polygamy, has a horribly bloody record, and that its followers are fanatical and intolerant; all this in his estimation is true and ought to condemn any religion. The average ignorant Christian in America—and I suspect he is the same in England—fully believes that every Mahomedan has a harem full of wives where he spends the greater portion of his time when he is not prowling about with sword in hand seeking to kill a Christian. A fairly intelligent Christian once told me that every Mahomedan believed that he could not get a really good place in paradise until he had killed and eaten a Christian. "But," said a Parsee to me in

Rangoon, "you cannot deny that our present advanced civilization is due to Christianity." "Well I do deny it," I said, and then I referred him to the New Testament and to the sermon on the Mount, and asked him to try to harmonize those principles with what is called Christian civilization. It cannot be done. The cold truth is that this Western civilization has nothing of the true spirit of Christianity in it, but is the legitimate offspring of ambition and selfishness. It is also a well-known fact that the course of Western progress and advancement has always been obstructed by the Christian Church, ever since that church has had an existence. It has always stood in front of the procession and shouted with uplifted hands: "You mustn't go any further, or you will weaken and degrade me." And then when it has been pushed aside and the irresistible tide has swept past it, it has tried in every way to impede and harass the moving column. And now with marvellous assurance and impudence it says: "See what we have done. Look at our glorious Christian civilization and then fall down and worship us." The truth is, and every man can ascertain it for himself, that what is called Christian civilization was born in the 8th century among the Moslems of Spain, while the Christian world was plunged in the depths of ignorance and barbarism. Professor Draper says, "I have to deplore the systematic manner in which the literature of Europe has contrived to put out of sight our scientific obligations to the Mahomedans. Surely they cannot be much longer hidden. Injustice founded on religious rancor and national conceit can not be perpetuated for ever. . . . The Arab has left his intellectual impress on Europe, as, before long, Christendom will have to confess; he has indelibly written it on the heavens, as anyone may see who reads the names of the stars on a common celestial globe." Everyone who believes that ours is a Christian civilization, born of Christianity, should read Professor Draper's "Intellectual Development of Europe," or any other honest historical work treating of the subject. Stanley Lane-Poole in his "Moors in Spain" shows that Europe acquired her first knowledge of the arts and sciences from the Moslems, and while showing the degraded condition of the rest of Europe, says: "Whatsoever makes a kingdom great and prosperous, whatsoever tends to refinement and civilization, was found in Moslem Spain." I earnestly hope that the Christians will soon learn to be rational and honest and that we shall hear no more of this senseless twaddle about "Christian" civilization.

And now let us glance briefly at that great bugbear, polygamy. Almost the first question a Christian asks me is: "Do you believe in polygamy?" "Yes," I reply, "under certain conditions." And last week an educated Mussulman said to me: "Surely you do not believe in polygamy—you would not advocate its introduction in America?" He was clearly surprised when I said that I not only believed in polygamy but would advocate its introduction into the American social system as soon

America had become sufficiently moral and refined to accept it decently and respectfully. Let us look at this

question rationally. When our Prophet taught on earth unlimited polygamy was sanctioned by the laws and social customs of Arabia. He modified the practice by allowing his followers to marry only four wives, telling them plainly that they should not marry any more women than they could treat with equal love and justice. He subsequently declared that no man could love two wives equally, and this declaration practically annulled the privilege of marrying four. It is quite clear that his purpose was to purify the existing social conditions and elevate the domestic relations to a higher moral standard. While polygamy is looked upon in the West as vicious and criminal and subversive of morality and justice, in the East it has quite a different aspect, owing to social traditions and customs, and is considered quite in harmony with the most exalted ideas of propriety. Now there are many sides to this question, and to discuss it fully would require more time than is at my disposal this evening. I freely admit the fact that the introduction of polygamy at once into our American social system would certainly prove most pernicious; but when the system and its purposes and tendencies are properly understood, and the beneficent moral influences of Islam have produced the effects which they must inevitably produce among an educated and enlightened people, it can and should be advocated. It is absolutely the only remedy for the woes of prostitution and marital infidelity with which America and Europe are most grievously afflicted, and it will elevate our womanhood to that exalted and admirable position which it is fitted by nature to occupy. While Mahomedan law permits polygamy, it does not present it as an article of faith, and no good Mussulman would think of marrying more than one wife unless the conditions existing in his home imperatively demanded such a course, and he could conform to the spirit of the Islamic requirements. One is allowed to marry four wives if in so doing he does not violate the laws of the land in which he lives, but he may have one wife or none at all without sacrificing any of his religious rights or privileges. One can be just as good a Mussulman, as a monogamist or a bachelor, as he can as a polygamist, and will stand just as well in the estimation of his neighbours. Go with me into any large American or European city and see the evidences of that resistless torrent of vice and crime that rushes and seethes through the social fabric; go with me to a fashionable ball reception or dinner party and see the position in which noble woman, one of the grandest works of God, has been placed by the usages and customs of this 19th century civilization; see the honored wives of wealthy educated Christians and their virtuous daughters, exposing to the view of men whose blood and passions are fired by the fumes of alcohol, personal charms which should be seen only in the privacy and purity of the home; take up the newspapers and see the records of divorces, social scandals, and marital woes that fill us with shame and disgrace, and then tell me that these so-called Christian laws and Christian customs are good things. And where is the remedy for all this? In Mahomedan laws and customs—in Islamic principles. Christian laws and

customs have been tried for many centuries and have failed utterly. Now give Islam a trial.

And now let us touch briefly upon the bloody record of Mahomedanism and the Propaganda of the sword. So far as blood-stains are concerned I hardly believe that Mahomedanism has any reason to blush when she compares her garments with those of Christianity. Have you ever read the history of the Inquisition and Crusades? When the Khalif Omar took Jerusalem in 637 he rode into the city by the side of the Patriarch Sophronius, conversing with him on its antiquities. Not a drop of blood was shed. But when the Christian Crusaders entered it the brains of young children were dashed against the walls, infants were thrown over the battlements, every woman that could be seized was violated, men were roasted on fires; some were ripped open to see if they had swallowed gold; the Jews were driven into their synagogues and there burned. About 70,000 people, men, women, and children, were cruelly butchered. And this is the testimony of Christian historians not Mahomedan. It has been clearly shown that our Prophet, as well as the first Caliph, Abu Bekr, repeatedly and emphatically directed the Moslem generals to refrain from killing or injuring women, children, and old men, not to destroy the fields of grain or date trees, and to sheath the sword at once upon the surrender of a city. Humanity, mercy, and kindness were insisted upon.

When the Prophet entered Mecca upon its surrender to him, not a man, woman, or child was killed or ill-treated, and not a single house was plundered, although this was the city in which he had been so shamefully abused and persecuted, and its inhabitants were those who had cruelly wronged him. Why did he not take revenge when the opportunity offered itself? There was not a single sentiment of revenge or malice in his whole being; he was a Prophet of the God of love, truth, justice, and mercy. Both records are sad enough and bloody enough, Heaven knows, but I am firmly convinced that there is far less fiendishness and blood-thirstiness, and bestiality to be answered for by the Moslems than by the Christians. Did the Christians have a valid warrant in the teaching or conduct of the meek and lowly Jesus, giving them authority to go about murdering, in cold blood, those who did not believe as they did? But of course, they don't do it any more; not because some of them wouldn't like to, but public opinion has changed. It isn't safe to be too enthusiastic and conscientious and brutal now in making proselytes to one's religion no matter how confidently one may believe in it himself. And when I say to you that Mahomed never advocated, taught, nor consented to the propagation of Islam by means of the sword, and that he severely condemned violence and taking of life in any form, I tell you truths which can readily be verified by any honest, unprejudiced person who will take the trouble to investigate the matter impartially. A learned Moslem writer says:—"The remark that the sword is the inevitable penalty for the denial of Islam is one of the gravest of the false charges imputed to this faith by the professors of other religious

and arises from the utter ignorance of those who make the accusation. Islam inculcates and demands a hearty and sincere belief in all that it teaches, and that genuine faith which proceeds from a person's heart cannot be obtained by force or violence." The Holy Koran says:—"Let there be no forcing in religion; the right way has been made clearly distinguishable from the wrong one." If the Lord had pleased, all who are on the earth would have believed together; and wilt thou force men to be believers. Our Prophet himself was as thoroughly unaggressive, non-combative and peace-loving as the typical Shaker, and, while he realised the fact that a policy of perfect non-resistance would speedily have resulted in the murder of himself and every Moslem in Arabia, he urged his followers to avoid, as far as possible, violent collisions with the unbelievers and not to fight unless it was necessary in order to protect their lives. There are a number of accusations made against Mahomedanism, which, even if true, cannot justly be said to have even the remotest relation to the doctrines of Islam; there are zealots and fanatics in all religions bodies, and it is due to their weaknesses that discredit falls upon the faith they profess to follow. It would be useless to attempt, in a single lecture, to reply to all the false charges made against Mahomedanism by ignorant and prejudiced writers; but at the risk of exhausting your patience, I will refer to one more. It has been said that toleration is unknown among the Moslems. A Christian writer in "Chambers" Encyclopedia says:—"One remarkable feature of the Moslem rule in Spain deserves mention, as it contrasts them so favourably with the contemporary and subsequent rulers of that country even to the present time, and that is their universal toleration in religious matter." Being a Christian this writer can hardly be accused of partiality to Islam. Godfrey Higgins, another writer who can safely be called a 19th century Christian at least, says:—"Nothing is so common as to hear the Christian priests abuse the religion of Mahomed for its bigotry and intolerance. Wonderful assurance and hypocrisy! Who was it that expelled the Moriscos from Spain because they would not turn Christians? Who was it that murdered the millions of Mexico and Peru and gave them all away as slaves because they were not Christians? What a contrast have the Mahomedans exhibited in Greece! For many centuries the Christians have been permitted to live in the peaceful possession of their properties, their religion, their priests, bishops, patriarchs, and churches; and the war between the Greeks and Turks was no more waged on account of religion than was the war between the negroes in Demarara and the English, . . . . Wherever the Caliphs conquered, if the inhabitants turned Mahomedans, they were instantly on a footing of perfect equality with the conquerors." An ingenious and learned dissenter, speaking of the Saracens says:—"They persecuted nobody; Jews and Christians all lived happy among them." Higgins also says:—"In all the history of the Caliphs there cannot be shown anything half so infamous as the Inquisition."

nor a single instance of an individual burnt for his religious opinion; nor, do I believe, put to death in a time of peace for simply embracing Islam. "But," says the Christian, "all that was characteristic of the centuries long past—Christians are not so bigoted and intolerant to-day. Aren't they? Go to the Philippine Islands, a country with a population of over seven millions of souls, which is and has been under the rule of Christian Spain for 300 years. Try to teach any religious system but the Roman Catholic and see what will happen to you. There is no Mohammedan country on earth that refuses to admit Christian missionaries, and that does not give them ample protection. Three years ago two representatives of the British and foreign Bible Society of London went to Manila, the capital city of the Philippine Islands, to sell Bibles. One of them died within three weeks after his arrival, and there were people wicked enough to say that he was poisoned at the instigation of some of the Catholic priests. The other was arrested, and thrown into jail on a charge of teaching contrary to the State religion, but was afterwards sent to Singapore by order of the Spanish Government. That was only about three years ago. A few months later seven Buddhist priests from Foo Chow, China, who were induced by their fellow-countrymen in Manila to go there believing that they would be allowed to celebrate a Buddhist ceremony there, were arrested, fined, and sent back to China. A vast volume of evidence might be adduced to show the utter groundlessness of the charge of intolerance. As a matter of fact intolerance is entirely foreign to the principles of Islam, and no intelligent Moslem would be guilty of, or consent to it.

The essence of the true faith of Islam is resignation to the will of God and its cornerstone is prayer. It teaches universal fraternity, universal love, and universal benevolence, and requires purity of mind, purity of action, purity of speech and perfect physical cleanliness. It is the simplest and most elevating form of religion known to man. It has no paid priesthood, nor elaborate ceremonial, admits no vicarious atonement nor relieves its followers of any of the responsibility for their sins. It recognizes but one God, the Father of all things, the divine spirit that dwells in all the manifestations of nature, the one omniscient, omnipotent, omni-present, ruler of the universe, to whom its followers devoutly pray and before whom all stand upon a platform of perfect equality and fraternity. The devout Mussulman, one who has arrived at an intelligent comprehension of the true teachings of Our Holy Prophet, lives in his religion and makes it the paramount principle of his existence. It is with him in all his goings and comings during the day, and he is never so occupied with his business or worldly affairs that he cannot turn his back upon them, when the stated hour of prayer arrives, and present his soul to God. His loves, his sorrows, his hopes, his fears are all immersed in it; it is his last thought when he lies down to sleep at night and the first to enter his mind at dawn when the voice of the

Muezzin rings out loudly and clearly from the minaret of the mosque, waking the soft echoes of the morn with its thrilling solemn, majestic monotones: "Come to Prayer! Come to Prayer! Prayer is better than sleep! Prayer is better than sleep!"

After the usual votes of thanks accorded to the Chairman and the lecturer Mr. Budroodin Abdulla Kur promised, that the whole lecture would be printed in a pamphlet form both in English and Urdu.

The following three letters are printed with this lecture to remove any misunderstanding that may exist from the minds of Mussulman brethren about Mr. Webb's visit to India.

BADRUDIN ABDULLA KUR.

#### MOHAMMEDAN PROPAGANDA IN AMERICA.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "BOMBAY GAZETTE."

SIR,—For the last two years I have been in correspondence with Mr. Alexander Webb, the United States Consul at Manila. Mr. Webb has fully studied the religious systems of the East, and being convinced of the truth of Islam he has embraced this faith. By his last letter and a telegram he informs me that he has resigned the post of Consul General at Manila, and has started for America via Burma and India, to establish a mission at New York for the propagation of the Islamic faith on the American Continent.

As the subject has attracted a great deal of attention in this country, I think, Sir, that the scheme of American propaganda, framed by Mr. Webb, as well as his last letter to me, may be fitly placed before the public at this juncture. More than seven thousand rupees have been already collected at Hyderabad, Deccan, and it is evident that in this epoch-making last decade of the nineteenth century the Islamic world is fully prepared to push its triumphs in the Western world through the refined instruments of persuasion and preaching.

Let it, however, be said to the credit of the English race that without their noble instincts of justice, love of truth, and moral courage, the task of propagating Islam in their enlightened country would be simply hopeless.—Yours, &c.,

BADRUDIN ABDULLA KUR.

Bombay, Sept. 12.

Consulate of the United States of America at Manila, Philippine Islands.

MANILA, July 4, 1892.

BUDRUDIN ABDULLA KUR, Esq., Bombay.

My dear Brother,—Your letter, dated 1st ultimo, and enclosing one from our esteemed brother, Abdulla Arab, is at hand. It gives me great pleasure to know that you are taking such an active interest in the proposed American mission, which, I feel assured now, will be a pronounced success. I am fully satisfied that when the Mahomedans of India thoroughly understand the nature of the movement and the character of the field in which it is to be established, together with

its possible effects upon the propaganda in Europe, and upon the Moslem organization in the East, they will give it their most earnest and active support. To me, it is in no sense an experiment likely to result in failure, for I know the general tendency of thought in my country and the general characteristics of my countrymen too well to entertain for a moment the idea that anything but success is possible. Besides I have faith in the power and wisdom of Almighty God (Praised be His name for ever), and as Islam is the true religion I feel confident that He will guide, direct and support a movement for its propagation which promised such great results as this. I have for several years been convinced that there were unseen influences at work bringing about a condition of things calculated to overthrow the current erroneous religious systems of the world and establish mankind in the one true system. But which that system was to be was to me uncertain until I arrived at a comprehension of the character and doctrines of Islam. I have had some strange experiences of which I hope to have the privilege of talking with you soon, and which have seemed to me as evidence that God was guiding me for some great and wise purpose, the ultimate object of which was the spiritual benefit of mankind. I do not desire to give you the impression that I believe I have been inspired directly, but circumstances have so shaped themselves in my life that they have drawn me directly toward the movement in which I am about to engage with all the earnestness, vigour, and intellectual ability that God has given me. As I wrote to you more than a year ago it seemed that I was destined to work out quietly, and in my own way the bringing of my countrymen to a knowledge of Islam, and it hardly seemed probable then that any other way was open. But God in his wisdom has opened a broader, surer, and better way generally, and I can see clearly how I am to devote my efforts to bring about more speedily and thoroughly the desired results. I am impatient to meet you and talk freely with you concerning the matter, for I feel sure that you will agree with me not only that the object is of the grandest importance, but that there has been something more than ordinary human agencies at work in bringing the project to its present condition. God is great, and will surely guide his servants in the right way.

I have sent my resignation to my Government, and I am awaiting instructions as to the disposition of the office and effects. If I am obliged to remain here until my successor arrives, I will be unable to leave before about the 1st of October, but if I am authorized to turn the office over to some one here I can leave the latter part of August or early in September. I will then start for Bombay via Singapore, Rangoon, and Calcutta. My wife and family left for the United States on the 8th of last month, and will go to a fruit ranch about 40 miles from San Francisco, where they will remain until I am fairly settled in New York.

The books you sent me have been a source of the deepest interest to me, and I have learned a great deal that was new to me, concerning the diversity and

general direction of Mussulman thought and opinion. I understand that you do not endorse all the views and the opinions expressed and judging from your marginal notes, I am inclined to the belief that you and I will not be very far apart in our views. I have, or think I have, a good conception of the spirit of Mahomed's teachings and the fundamental principles of Islam. Hence I am forced to reject many of the opinions I have encountered. Hughes' Dictionary of Islam abounds with prejudice and error, and there are some suggestions made by Syed Ameer Ali that I can hardly endorse. The critical exposition of the Jihad is a most important and interesting work to me, but it ought to be rewritten and revised, so that its English will be smoother and more concise. But in his treatment of the subject the author has furnished me with matter which will be of inestimable value to me when I begin active work in America. But of these matters I hope, if it is God's pleasure, to talk with you when we meet. God grant that the hearts and minds of our brethren in India may be opened, and that those who are able to do so will give us as much literary help as they can.

Praying that the peace of God and His richest blessing may be with you here and, hereafter.—I am, your obedient brother,

ALEXANDER RUSSELL WEBB,

#### TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES OF INDIA.

Sir,—With reference to a letter appearing in your to-day's issue under the *nom de plume* of "A Mahomedan," you will kindly allow me to lay bare a few facts for the information of the public.

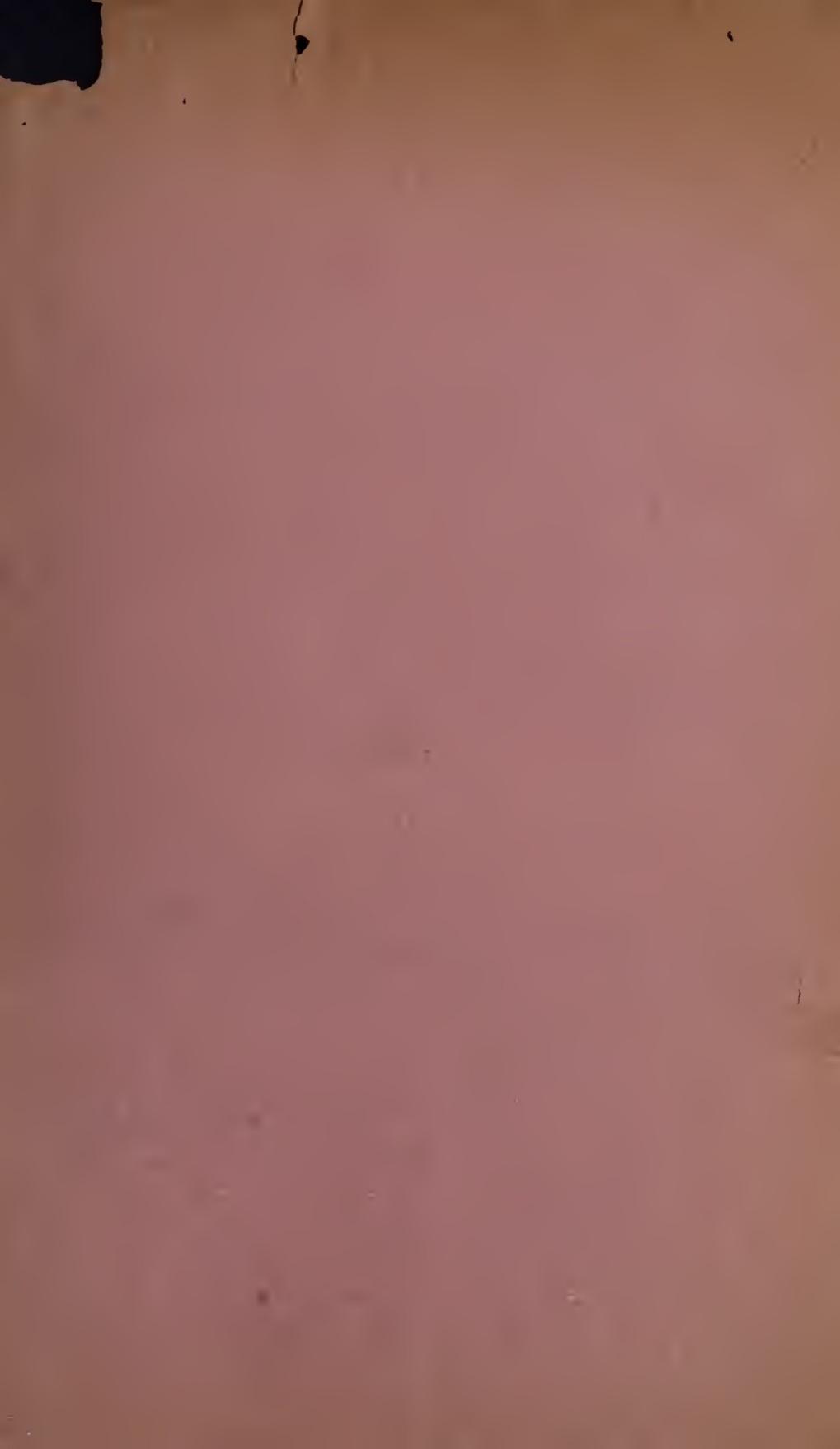
I have been in correspondence with Mr. Webb for more than two years past, and have been creating interest among the Mussulmans of this city for sending a Mahomedan Mission to the American Continent. So I showed the letters of Mr. Webb, with his permission, to many of my Mussulman friends, and among them to my friend Haji Abdulla Arab. Mr. Haji Abdulla Arab took up the matter so zealously that he went to Manilla at his own expense to confer with Mr. Webb. Mr. Webb having expressed his desire to resign his post of Consul-General at Manilla and devote his whole life to the propagation of Islam in the United States of America, Mr. Haji Abdulla Arab on his part promised to help the American Mission scheme so as to bring it on a sound financial basis. Mr. Abdulla also requested Mr. Webb to visit India, Egypt, Turkey, and Liverpool, on his way to America, so that he might come in friendly contact with the Mussulmans of those countries. This, in short, is the whole story.

It will thus be seen that Mr. Webb has not come to India to collect any money, but, on the contrary, he was requested to come here. Such of the Mahomedans as are willing to show the true light and essence of Islam to the Western world may assist in this noble cause and give their humble quota.

I think, Sir, that your correspondent should have ascertained facts and made due enquiries on the subject before he rushed into print. I have ample documentary proof to corroborate my statements, and your correspondent may do well to come to me and personally see them instead of writing under a disguise of "A Mahomedan." Whether it be to bring the civilized nations of the West in close fraternity with the Mussulmans or to alleviate the sufferings and the misery of the poor Mussulmans of this country, the field is, indeed, a boundless one for the charitably disposed rich Mahomedans. But will our people wake up and do something?—Yours, &c.,

BADRUDIN ABDULLA KUR

November 16.



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